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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

30 November 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-51: PROBABLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA  
AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF ATTACK UPON YUGOSLAVIA,  
THROUGH 1952. (For the consideration of the  
Board).

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable political developments in Yugoslavia  
through 1952 and the likelihood of Satellite or Soviet-Satellite  
attack upon Yugoslavia, through 1952.

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CONCLUSIONS

1. The internal difficulties of the present regime in Yugoslavia will probably increase through 1952, but we believe these difficulties are unlikely to threaten the stability of the regime.

2. The most important internal problem of the Tito regime is peasant dissatisfaction, which is due primarily to the regime's collectivization program and to the continued scarcity of consumer goods. This dissatisfaction, which has probably increased and which has become more vocal during the last six months, is likely to grow throughout 1952. It may weaken the regime, but it is unlikely to confront the Tito government with a threat to its existence.

3. The discontent felt within the middle and lower ranks of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) is unlikely to disturb the regime's stability.

4. The present regime has and almost certainly will retain firm control over the <sup>CPY</sup> Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the armed forces, and the security forces. Moreover, its internal position is strengthened by the popular nationalist reaction to Cominform pressures directed against Yugoslavia and to the growing cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Western powers.

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5. Through the period of this estimate, the <sup>CPY</sup> ~~Communist Party of~~  
~~Yugoslavia~~ will undoubtedly retain its present monopoly of power.

However, some of the methods by which this power is exercised will be relaxed, the fundamental goals established for the country's economy will be modified, but only slightly and temporarily, and Tito will continue close cooperation with the West.

6. Efforts of the Cominform to penetrate and undermine the regime by subversive means and to profit from current and probable future discontents will almost certainly fail. A coup d'etat directed against Tito by high members of the party or by other dissatisfied elements is extremely unlikely.

7. The assassination of Tito would eliminate the unquestioned leader of the party and the people, but it is almost certain that the Communist Party, the armed forces, the security forces, and the nation would rally behind his successors. Leadership and power during the months immediately following the death of Tito would probably be concentrated in the hands of Rankovic and Kardelj. Through the period of this estimate, the foreign and domestic policies of the new leaders would almost certainly follow those established during the past three years by Tito. Discord over domestic issues may develop within the ruling group after the first few months, but the fear of Soviet attack would probably reduce such disagreements to minor <sup>significance</sup> ~~disagreements~~.

8. Satellite capabilities for an attack on Yugoslavia have materially increased within the last two years. In an attack before 1953,

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the air forces of the adjacent Satellites could defeat the Yugoslav Air Force. The Satellite ground forces, with Soviet logistic support, could overcome organized Yugoslav resistance within three months and reduce Yugoslav forces to guerrilla warfare in the mountain redoubt area of Yugoslavia.

9. Although Satellite military, economic, and propaganda preparations indicate that a Satellite attack upon Yugoslavia is possible, it is unlikely that the Kremlin will launch such an attack within the period of this estimate. The risk of general war, made clear by US support of collective security and the provision of US economic and military aid to Yugoslavia, will probably deter the Kremlin from this course of action, unless it is ready to accept general war.

#### DISCUSSION

##### I. INTRODUCTION

10. NIE 29, "Probability of an Invasion of Yugoslavia in 1951," (20 March 1951), expressed the following conclusions:

(a) The ultimate Soviet objectives in Yugoslavia are to eliminate the Tito government, to replace it by a regime subservient to the USSR, and to integrate Yugoslavia politically, economically, and strategically into the Satellite structure.

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b. It is unlikely that the present regime in Yugoslavia could be overthrown in 1951 by a Soviet-inspired coup or by internal revolt.

c. The continuing military build-up in the neighboring Satellite states has reversed the previous balance of military strength between the Satellites and Yugoslavia and has given the Satellites the capability of launching a major invasion of Yugoslavia with little warning. A Satellite invasion of Yugoslavia, under central Soviet direction and with full Soviet logistical support, has the capability of forcing the Yugoslav armed forces back into the mountainous region along the Adriatic. Yugoslav guerrilla resistance would continue long after the collapse of organized military resistance, particularly if immediate Western military assistance were provided.

d. The large-scale Satellite military preparations do not provide conclusive evidence that a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia is scheduled for 1951, or within any specific period of time.

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e. The Kremlin may estimate that an attack by the Satellites in 1951 would not incur effective Western intervention or precipitate general war. On the other hand, the Kremlin may estimate that the Western Powers would give large-scale support to Yugoslavia which would create a greater risk of general war than the USSR was willing to accept. Finally, the Kremlin may be fully prepared for the

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eventuality of general war and may launch an attack on Yugoslavia regardless of the risks involved.

f. Although it is impossible to determine which course the Kremlin is likely to adopt, we believe that the extent of Satellite military and propaganda preparations indicates that an attack on Yugoslavia should be considered a serious possibility.

11. NIE 29/1, "Review of the Conclusions of NIE 29, 'Probability of an Invasion of Yugoslavia in 1951'," (4 May 1951), stated that although developments from 20 March 1951 through 4 May 1951 did not warrant the conclusion that a Satellite attack would take place in 1951, they did give added emphasis to the conclusion of NIE 29 that an attack should be considered a serious possibility.

12. Since these estimates were published, the need for an estimate of probable political developments in Yugoslavia and of the likelihood of attack through 1952 has become apparent due to major developments in three factors affecting these issues:

(a) Increasing discontent within Yugoslavia at the regime's domestic policies, especially among the peasants.

(b) Continuing increase in the capabilities of the Satellite armed forces.

(c) Increased economic and military aid from the West to Yugoslavia and the development of a more firm Western commitment to support Tito in case of attack.

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## II. INTERNAL STABILITY

### Peasant Dissatisfaction

13. The principal internal problem confronting the Tito government today is the increasingly articulate dissatisfaction of the peasants with the regime's domestic policy. This discontent reflects the general dislike of the regime felt by the great majority of the population. It has probably increased and certainly become more vocal during the past six months for the following reasons:

(a) The regime's insistence upon maintaining and developing its collectivization program.

(b) The continuing scarcity of consumer goods.

(c) The gradual relaxation of some of the more repressive police state measures, giving the peasants increased opportunity to express their discontent against the remaining restraints.

(d) The development of Yugoslav relations with the West, which has encouraged the peasants to express their grievances more openly and which may have led the peasants to believe that the collectivization program would be relaxed.

14. Peasant opposition in the summer of 1951 became more vocal as Tito gradually developed closer ties with the West. The situation became more serious in the fall of 1951 due to the government's restriction ~~of~~ denial of the legal right of peasants to withdraw, with their land, from state agricultural cooperatives on the expiration of their three-year contracts for trial membership.

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15. We do not believe, however, that discontent among the peasants has developed sufficiently to threaten Tito's government or that it is likely to constitute a serious danger within the period of this estimate. Peasant dissatisfaction will probably be limited to the refusal to plant in excess of peasant needs and to withholding food from the market. However, the regime will probably be able to deal effectively with peasant discontent for the following reasons:

- (a) The regime's control of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the armed forces, and the security forces is firm.
- (b) All anti-Communist elements in Yugoslavia are sharply divided and leaderless.

16. Moreover,

- (a) The peasants' nationalism leads them to support Tito in his struggle against the Cominform.
- (b) The present regime has achieved considerable success in weakening the nationalist rivalries which have undermined earlier Belgrade governments.
- (d) The regime skillfully utilized the popular peasant dislike of the priests' earlier role in local government when it revised the system of local government changes, and it now allows freedom of worship.
- ~~(e) The removal of food price controls and the probable future increase in the supply of consumer goods should weaken a basic cause of dissatisfaction.~~

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Troubles within the CPY.

17. The Yugoslav government has revised and relaxed some of its methods of control in order to increase efficiency, to lessen internal dissatisfaction, and to conciliate the West, although Tito and his regime remain Communist and although the CPY retains its monopoly of power. There has been some attempt to mitigate unpopular administrative, police, and judicial practices. A code of laws has been promulgated which provides protection against unlawful imprisonment, illegal search, and the use of coercion in extracting testimony. The security police, the judiciary, and the People's Committees (local governing bodies) have been reprimanded for exercising arbitrary and autocratic rule, and severe penalties have been introduced for officials guilty of misusing their powers. Although the regime continues to impose severe limitations upon fundamental freedom, there has apparently been some attempt to carry out the new code of laws.

18. In the economic field, several measures have been taken to decentralize administrative control and to encourage initiative through increasing the authority and responsibility of local management and labor and through allowing enterprises to retain a portion of their profits. Forced deliveries of most products, but not including grain, have been abolished in order to encourage peasant incentive, and the recent removal of controls on food prices had the same objective.

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19. The relaxation of "Communism of the Fist" has disturbed some members of the middle and lower ranks of the Communist Party. These groups, where some pro-Russian sentiment is still alive and where dissatisfaction exists with the regime's revised internal policy and its Western orientation, are also affected by the loss of personal prestige and power. However, we do not believe that this discontent does now or will within the period of this estimate constitute a threat to the stability of the regime.

Tito's Probable Course of Action.

20. Tito faces a wide variety of difficult problems which require and yet restrict his freedom of action. The great majority of the population, already opposed to Communism, will be encouraged in their opposition by Tito's closer relations with the West. Some members of the CPY will be apprehensive lest Western personnel and ideas infiltrate the Yugoslav Communist state. Tito must hold the loyalty of the Party and must at the same time avoid antagonizing the Western powers, upon whose economic and military assistance he is at least temporarily dependent.

21. Despite the nature of this dilemma, throughout the period of this estimate we believe that:

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(a) The CPY will undoubtedly retain its present monopoly of power.

(b) The methods by which this power is exercised will be modified and relaxed.

(c) The fundamental goals established for the country's economy will be modified, but only slightly and temporarily, since the regime has shown great reluctance to abandon or modify seriously its goal of an industrialized and collectivized economy.

(d) Tito will continue close cooperation with the West.

22. A quiet purge of the dissatisfied elements within the CPY will continue at least through the winter of 1951-52. This purge will strengthen the regime's control over the Party and also increase its popularity. Those members of the middle and lower ranks of the Party who have expressed dissatisfaction with the regime's relaxations of policy are being gradually removed from office, as are those who have made themselves excessively unpopular because of their fanaticisms and severity. Although there will probably be some liberalization of the administration, control will remain firmly in the hands of the present leaders.

23. There will probably be little increase in the amount of arable land collectivized during 1952. Recent evidence indicates that the least successful collectives will be broken up and the land returned to its original peasant owners. Tito has made clear, however, that collecti-

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vization of the land remains an objective of the regime and that the peasants must prepare to yield. Current and future peasant discontent will be firmly handled on a local level, but with such discretion that relations with the West will not be impaired.

24. The regime has shown much less skill in dealing with economic problems than it has with political issues. It has thus far refused to abandon or revise seriously its industrialization program. However, it is likely within the next few months that the regime will devote additional resources to the production of consumer goods in order to overcome the peasants' delay in food deliveries.

25. In his relations with the Western powers, Tito will probably make as few concessions as possible. He will <sup>resolutely</sup> ~~reluctantly~~ defend Yugoslav independence and freedom of action. He will probably be willing to develop closer economic and military relations with the free nations of Western Europe, but he is unlikely to join ~~any~~ formally any of the groupings now organized or being organized. Within the UN, he will continue to oppose the Western powers on issues involving their former colonial possessions.

26. These tactics will probably ensure the internal stability of the Tito regime through 1952, particularly since Tito has retained and almost certainly will retain firm control over the CPY, the armed forces, and the security forces.

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Probability and Consequences of a Coup.

27. Efforts of the Cominform to penetrate and undermine the regime by subversive means have thus far failed. There is no indication that the regime's large, loyal, and efficient security forces will not be able quickly to discover and liquidate any minor officials over whom the Cominform is able to acquire influence. The important officials of the party and of the regime are not likely to be troubled by what they surely regard as a "temporary retreat". Such tactical adjustments have always been recognized by Communists as compatible with Communist strategy. Moreover, it must be apparent to any Yugoslav Communist who has supported Tito that the likelihood of his survival in a regime controlled by Moscow is exceedingly slight.

28. A coup ~~XXI~~ d'etat directed against Tito by high members of the CPY, the armed forces, the security forces or by other dissatisfied elements is extremely unlikely. Tito now commands the loyalty and obedience of the Party and the forces, and even opponents of the regime apparently prefer ~~to~~ it to the reestablishment of alien control from Moscow.

29. The assassination of Tito remains a possibility. The loss of Tito would be a serious shock to the regime, but it is almost certain that the CPY, the armed forces, the security forces, and the nation as a

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whole would rally behind his successors. Power during the months immediately following the death of Tito would probably be concentrated in the hands of Rankovic and Karmelj. Through the period of this estimate, the foreign and domestic policies of the new leaders would almost certainly follow that established during the past three years by Tito. Discord over domestic issues may develop within the ruling group after the first few months, but the fear of Soviet attack would probably reduce such disagreements to minor significance.

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### III. THE MILITARY SITUATION

#### The Yugoslav Armed Forces.

30. The Yugoslav ground forces now consist of 325,000 men organized into 33 divisions, of which two are mechanized. The size of these forces is not expected to increase significantly within the period of this estimate. Their fighting ability is high, and they are supplemented by 60,000 members of the Frontier Guards (KNOJ) and security forces estimated at 40,000. The air force has 726 aircraft, of which 393 are stationed with tactical units. All of the aircraft are of German or Soviet World War II design and construction, and Yugoslav air force morale consequently was somewhat lower than that of the other forces until recently. The capabilities of the Yugoslav navy are currently negligible.

31. The strength of the Yugoslav armed forces has remained approximately constant throughout the past two or three years, though the deterioration of Yugoslav material may have proceeded at a rate more rapid than the rate of improvement of morale, training, and staff work. The military supplies thus far provided by the West have been very limited and have consisted almost entirely of light equipment. Current Yugoslav military capabilities are seriously restricted by the following:

- (a) Insufficient quantity and poor quality of much of the equipment.
- (b) Heterogeneity of present equipment, mostly of Soviet and German World War II stocks.

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- (c) Lack of spare parts and of proper ammunition.
- (d) Severe shortage of heavy weapons, particularly of anti-tank artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, and armor.
- (e) Inadequate and largely obsolescent air force.
- (f) General staff tactics and techniques, particularly in planning and coordinating the movements of large forces.

32. United States military equipment scheduled for delivery under the military aid agreement signed recently is intended to replace some of the materiel now used by the Yugoslav armed forces and to supply newly organized supporting units. Little of this equipment will be delivered before mid-1952. No real increase of Yugoslav military capabilities can be expected before the end of 1952, since first this equipment must be delivered to the units, the troops must be trained in its operation and maintenance, and staff work must be improved.

The Satellite Armed Forces.

33. Yugoslavia's military capabilities, in relation to those of the neighboring Satellites, have declined steadily during the past two years. The ground forces of Albania, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria are now estimated at 495,000 men, organized into 39 divisions, of which 4 are armored and 2 mechanized. These forces have grown in size approximately 50 percent from January 1950 through September 1951, and it is

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believed they will increase an additional 27 percent by the end of 1952. The Kremlin is reorganizing the Satellite ground forces so that they will conform to the Soviet pattern. The Bulgarian army is apparently the most loyal and formidable, with its 13 divisions almost fully equipped with Soviet materiel, reserve stockpiles available, and good morale.

34. The ground forces of the Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia are supported by air forces which possess more than 1100 aircraft. These air forces have more than doubled in size since May 1951, and particular emphasis has been placed upon ground support aircraft.

#### IV. LIKELIHOOD OF ATTACK UPON YUGOSLAVIA.

35. The ultimate Soviet objectives in Yugoslavia remain the elimination of the Tito regime, the replacement of this regime by a government subservient to Moscow, and the political, economic, and military reintegration of Yugoslavia into the Soviet sphere. There is still no conclusive evidence which indicates when or how the USSR intends to attain these objectives.

36. The following factors could indicate a Soviet intention to attack Yugoslavia during 1952:

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(a) The capabilities of the armed forces of the Satellites have greatly increased during the past two years. In an attack before 1953, the air forces of the adjacent Satellites could defeat the Yugoslav air force, and their ground forces, with Soviet logistic support, could overcome organized Yugoslav resistance and reduce Yugoslav forces to guerrilla warfare in the mountain redoubt area.

(b) The Satellites neighboring Yugoslavia, ~~especially Bulgaria,~~ have evacuated the majority of civilians from key border areas.

(c) Soviet and Satellite propaganda has attempted to erase the ideological difficulty connected with an attack on Tito by identifying him with Fascism and denying that he had even an early affiliation with Communism. Tito is also charged with participating in Western preparations for future aggression.

37. The increase in the armed strength of the Satellites during the last two years does not necessarily reflect a Soviet intention to launch an attack upon Yugoslavia during 1952. Satellite military strength would almost certainly have increased substantially during this period even if Yugoslavia had not defected. There has been no apparent sense of urgency in the development of the Satellite armed forces, or in coordinating the military activities of the four countries which neighbor Yugoslavia. It is estimated that the Bulgarian, Rumanian and Hungarian armed forces will not complete their reorganization and reach maximum effectiveness until the end of 1952 and Albania not until mid-1954.

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38. The Satellite economic program, designed to advance simultaneously the industrial base and the immediate military capabilities of the Satellite area, has created a progressively advancing state of war-readiness. There is, however, no indication that the long-term aims of the economic program are being sacrificed to achieve greater immediate war-readiness.

39. Current Soviet and Satellite propaganda provides little evidence concerning the likelihood of an armed attack on Yugoslavia within the period of this estimate. The volume of propaganda directed at Yugoslavia has remained constant. Recent propaganda is almost identical in its hostility with that of mid-1948. The mid-1951 declarations that the Yugoslav people "would find a way to freedom" disappeared by September and were apparently only a facet in the general war of nerves against Yugoslavia.

40. Past Soviet actions suggest that the Kremlin considers Yugoslavia as only one factor affecting the general position of the USSR and not as an isolated problem. Consequently, there is little likelihood that the USSR will launch a Satellite attack upon Yugoslavia without carefully assessing the effect such an attack would have upon the general Soviet political and strategic position.

41. The Kremlin may estimate that its general political and strategic position does not require the early elimination of the Tito regime. The Kremlin may believe that the existence of Tito now poses a less serious problem for the USSR than it has in the past. The threat of the Titoist heresy to Soviet control of the Satellites and the international Communist

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movement has for all practical purposes been checked, and the Kremlin probably realizes that Yugoslavia is not now and cannot become a serious military threat to the Satellites before 1953, if then.

42. There is some indication that the USSR considers "the Peace Campaign" its most important political weapon in its attempt to prevent Western rearmament. Unless the Kremlin has decided to gain its global objectives by armed force rather than by political and economic means, it would probably hesitate to diminish the effectiveness of the "Peace Campaign" by a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia.

43. It is unlikely that the Kremlin will launch a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia unless it is prepared to accept general war. The growing cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Western Powers and the concrete indications of that cooperation in the last six months<sup>2</sup> have probably convinced the USSR that even a Satellite attack would entail a very grave risk of general war. UN action in Korea, the growing movement in the UN for collective action against an aggressor, and the progress of Western rearmament should further convince the Kremlin of the danger inherent in such an attack.

44. If the USSR is now prepared or should become prepared in 1952 to accept the risk of general war, it might launch an attack upon Yugoslavia.

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If such an attack were launched, it seems likely that only Satellite forces would be employed, at least initially. The Kremlin would probably claim that Yugoslavia had attacked one of the Satellites. It might claim that Satellite "volunteers" were assisting a group revolting against Tito.

45. Although Satellite military, economic, and propaganda preparations indicate that an attack upon Yugoslavia in 1952 is possible, we believe it is unlikely unless the USSR is willing to accept general war.

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\* Visit of Yugoslav Chief of Staff to US in May-June 1951.

London Conference of US, UK and France regarding Tripartite Aid Program to Yugoslavia in June 1951.

Arrival of \$10,000,000 US military aid shipment in June 1951; arrival of second shipment in August-September 1951.

Visit of US Chief of Staff to Yugoslavia in October 1951.

Visits of Western officials, particularly US Congressmen, to Yugoslavia.

Signing of Military Aid Agreement between US and Yugoslavia in November 1951.

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